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STATE FOR NEA/ARPI, NEA/PA, NEA/AIA, NEA/PI, INR/NESA, R/MR, I/GNEA,
B/BXN, B/BRN, NEA/PPD, NEA/IPA FOR ALTERMAN
LONDON FOR TSOU
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SUBJECT: KUWAIT MEDIA REACTION ON THE PARLIAMENTARY ELECTIONS

Block Quotes

Saturday, June 3, 2006

-- Political Science Professor at Kuwait University, Dr. Abdullah Khalifa Al-Shaijy wrote in the moderate Arabic-language daily Al-Watan under the title "Questions that need answers for the upcoming elections" (6/3): "What do we expect from the parliamentary establishment that remains the safety valve on the political system of any state? How will the parliamentary experience lead to development of the Kuwaiti parliament which has stayed unchanged for some time? And, why does it drown in struggles and debates that are based on sectarian, tribal, and familial ties? And, why hasn't the Kuwaiti parliament developed, other than minutely, during the last four decades?"

-- KUNA journalist Mona Shashtar penned in the pro-government Arabic-language daily Al-Seyassah under the title "Tabtabaei, thank God you do not hold the keys to heaven" (6/3): "Strange Fatwas concerning the political situation and the National Council that are presented to us sporadically by the dean of the Shari'a College Dr. Mohamed Al-Tabtabaei; the last of which states that a woman's vote should be according to her husband's desire. And, if the husband swears to divorce the woman and she votes for a candidate other than the one specified by him, the divorce is valid. There are many questions for which there is no space but at the end we say to the Dr. thank God the keys to heaven are not in your hands, otherwise you would not let us in. Regards from the Kuwaiti female voters."

Sunday, June 4, 2006

-- Badr Khalid Al-Bahr wrote in the progressive Arabic-language daily Al-Qabas under the title "Will the female candidate bear her shame?" (6/4): "Will women in our society be able to survive and bear [political] scandals as men have been able to in the west? So far, the answer does not seem optimistic. We do not think women will be able to bear political scandals even if we become open to the world, women will remain unable to bear the shame, even as candidate."

-- Former Media Advisor to Minister of Foreign Affairs, Sami Abdul Latif Al-Nesf inquires in the moderate Arabic-language daily Al-Anbaa under the title "Elections 2006" (6/4): "How will women vote? That is the important question in the upcoming election. Some think that women will not change the results as the candidate who is used to winning with one thousand votes will win with five thousand votes. Women's opinions will not be far from men's opinions. Personally, I think that this will exist in a few districts as for the others, there will be frustration and anger amongst women and

that will change every equation. Beware of angry women."

-- Professor of Political Science at Kuwait University, Dr. Shamlan Yousef Al-Issa states in the pro-government daily Al-Seyassah under the title "Questions women should ask" (6/4): "Women face a dilemma these days in trying to choose the right candidate, male or female, who represents their interests and inspirations. The questions that women should ask of the candidate before voting are: 'What is the candidate's position on women's issues? What political powers oppose women's rights? Why did some Islamist powers oppose women working? Why do these powers aim to retire women early? And, why do these powers discourage women from working outside of their homes?'"

Monday, June 5, 2006

-- Former MP and Former Minister of Oil, Ali Ahmed Al-Baghli commented in the progressive Arabic-language daily Al-Qabas under the title "Machiavelli's spawn" (6/5): "The candidates who have declared their support for the five-district reform did not do so because they long for reform. They did not do so to be parrots repeating what others are saying. They did so hoping that their popularity that is spread out in different areas in Kuwait will guarantee their win. These expired faces should rest and wait to see what comes of the upcoming redistricting battle. However, they have grown with Machiavellian notions and that is why we can do nothing but label them Machiavelli's spawn."

-- Engineer and Municipal Council Member, Shaykha Fawzia Salim Al-Sabah wrote in moderate Arabic-language daily Al-Rai Al-Aam under the title "Obstacles facing women candidates" (6/5): "Despite Kuwaiti women's liberation politically, they have not yet been liberated socially. That is why their political movements are slow and shy. Her sense of responsibility may be greater than a man's, but she remains constrained by her family's decisions. Whoever her

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father, brother, or husband votes for, she will vote for. Moreover, she does not have the political culture since she still is hesitant to attend seminars at the electoral headquarters, even if those headquarters belong to women."

-- Saleh Al-Shaiji noted in the moderate Arabic-language daily Al-Anbaa under the title "Even you, my lady candidate?" (6/5): "It seems that some of our women dove into the political process and went to its depths and rested at the bottom. A few years ago a candidate claimed that he was shot at in an assassination attempt. After investigation it turned out to be a ploy to get publicity. We now see one of the women candidates who soon after walking out of the elections authority and signing up as a candidate claimed to have received death threats yet she did not withdraw her candidacy.... We have been optimistic about women's participation in the political process, but it seems that some women are following in certain men's footsteps in using the same illegitimate political weapons. The most important thing to them is winning no matter how."

Tuesday, June 6, 2006

-- Former Chair of Kuwait University's History Department, Najat Nasser Al-Haji argued in the moderate Arabic-language daily Al-Anbaa under the title "Vote buying" (6/6): "What is being said about the phenomenon of vote buying upsets the silent majority. There is rampant fear of dust being kicked up around the transparency of the electoral process and its integrity which are two elements that distinguish our elections. We call on everyone to maintain our democracy and its presentation of the true opinions of voters.... We hope for a democratic process that includes honest campaigning. This will be the voice of democracy and the right given to us by God and with which we have been entrusted."

-- Abdul Rahman Al-Najar, host of Kuwait TV's "TV Network" talk program, complained in the moderate Arabic-language daily Al-Watan under the title "Withdrawals from the elections" (6/6): "What is the story behind these candidates who register and then withdraw a few days later? Is there something forcing them to withdraw? Or, are they complying with the wishes of someone who entices them with

money, promises, or expensive presents? Our mind tells us that most of the withdrawals were done as a result of promises that are hard to resist at this time when monetary values are mixed with moral values."

-- Walid Abdullah Al-Ghanim wrote in the progressive Arabic-language daily Al-Qabas under the title "Will women sell their votes?" (6/6): "The vote buying phenomenon is the large gateway through which the corrupt elements can reach the parliamentary seats then use those seats to acquire as much personal benefit as possible, of course at the expense of the state and the citizenry. The state's security apparatuses have only prosecuted one case of bribery during the last 15 years, despite the fact that people talk about it all over. If one were to ask expatriate laborers, they would point one to the places where the selling and buying occurs.... Women are falling into the same pitfalls of buying and selling votes these days. Since the general situation allows for such things to take place and the government does nothing to combat them, one cannot predict a seizure of such activities."

-- Fouad Al-Hashim wrote in the moderate Arabic-language daily Al-Watan under the title "The fibers of women's brains" (6/6): "Had Abdul Karim Al-Qasim invaded Kuwait in 1961 the American forces would have intervened under the command of President John Kennedy and Kuwait would have been liberated and women would have gotten their suffrage 40 years ago. But, the invasion was 40 years late and with a little bit of pressure from George Bush the son women got to vote and run for office. Had Kuwaiti women been voting since the liberation the number of female MPs would be close to ten by now. So, now we will need another 40 years before we become humans."

Wednesday, June 7, 2006

-- Jamal Al-Suwaifan claimed in the moderate Arabic-language daily Al-Anbaa under the title "Women's voices decide the elections" (6/7): "The upcoming parliamentary elections have a different flavor from all those of the past because of the women's suffrage.... Some of the candidates have their already-established male electoral base. However, there is no doubt that women coming into the process will raise the popularity of some figures. By these I mean those supported by the different political parties. It is commonly known that women do not vote for women as a result of their instinctual jealousy which is not as active in men. Women's votes will be the decisive factor in the upcoming elections and will change the

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political landscape of the country."

-- Secretary General of the Journalists' Association, Faisal Al-Qanai, criticized in the pro-government Arabic-language daily Al-Seyassah under the title "They are all liars" (6/7): "When one reads the slogans put on signs by candidates one thinks that they are all passionate about the country, that their aim is to serve its interests voluntarily, and that they will not personally benefit, and that no money will enter their pockets. I do not know how citizens can fall prey to such ploys that the candidates have carried on for sometime now and mastered.... The real slogan that is hidden behind all these fake slogans is 'He who gets it, provides for his flock'."

-- Lawyer Aziza Al-Mifrij remarked in the moderate Arabic-language daily Al-Watan under the title "Before you vote" (6/7): "Beware of all the tricks, tall tales, and deception as we approach the parliamentary elections. We hope voters will not be fooled by the talks, slogans, and facades and will vote for the patriotic Kuwaitis who care about Kuwait and its citizens more than they care for their own offspring. Every one of us should open up our eyes and ears and put their brains to work before placing their ballots in the boxes. Liars are many and for those who have already sold their votes we say 'our regards to your conscience'."

-- Mohamed Mater Al-Bghaili wrote in the moderate Arabic-language daily Al-Rai Al-Aam under the title "The vote bourse" (6/7): "We ask the candidates who have made gains in this market, are you truly a representative of democracy? And how can that be when you are lacking it? And we turn to the voters who have sold their conscience

and ask, are you really comfortable with what you have done to your generation? Can you someday be a leader to your family? And how can that be when you have sold your freedom of expression on the vote market?"

-- Shi'a former MP, Dr. Abdul Mohsen Yousef Jamal wrote in the progressive Arabic-language daily under the title "Who wants to deface democracy?" (6/7): "There are some who want to deface Kuwait democracy and paint it in a negative light as one laced with political money, primaries, and vote and conscience buying. Here, combating such defacing must be a national duty for the government and the nationalist popular powers.... We warn of slipping into the swamp of corruption. The government should move against corruption because if it spreads then everyone will be affected not only those who have transgressed."

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